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EDUCATION AND THE QUALITATIVE STANDARD

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

Again the world fronts a new orientation after the long habit of fixed direction has left us indisposed to any change in course. So, periodically in the past, has come earth-shaking catastrophe and a world ready for the making-over; so some of us predicted calamity even in the midst of the fat complaisance of the first decade of this century, but neither history nor prophecy quite prepared us for the lightning-thrust, the prolonged and monstrous agony, the miraculous and instant crumbling and universal victory that place the last five years in the category of the historically improbable, the humanly impossible. I fear we are little prepared for the task that rises up before us out of the wide ruins of an era; Europe shattering before our eyes, a civilization discredited and impotent in its ruin; the foundations of all things overturned, and the red menace of new barbarian hordes threatening us with a new Dark Ages. A world forged new engines of destruction and incredibly multiplied the old, and now these must be transformed from menace to beneficence. We who were neither fighters nor makers of munitions, we educators, artists, philosophers, find the task before us of transforming what we have made for the occasion of war; we turn back, now we are at liberty to emerge from our seclusion, back to the old enginery that was ours before the war,—and as we touch it we know it has gone with the rest and shows now as ancient and inopportune as the various plunder of an archaeological museum.

How the X-ray of war reveals the inner fallacies of the

varied components in what we once (or was it our fathers before us; it is very long ago?) called civilization! Verily, in this searching and mordant light we find ourselves naked indeed, for what we had treasured is dust and dead leaves; what we had discarded shows now very desirable but no longer easy of attainment. Yet the old must be discarded, the "older old" acquired again; for a new world is to be built up, and history shows only too well that the greater danger lies not in the destructive process but in the re-creation. I say the old must be discarded, and by the word I mean not what was old to us five years ago but what then was contemporary, for the war has hurled back into remote antiquity the things that then were of the moment. To this there can be no return, for the war came to show us what it was—and now we know. Of the two grave perils that face us, either of which means ruin and a new Dark Ages, I am not sure that reaction is not worse than the insane anarchy of Bolshevism. There is little to choose between them, for both are fatal. We are no longer Calvinists and we know that free will is an operative force; the choice is with us whether we will and accomplish a new Renaissance or a new Dark Ages. Say we will the first; it is to be achieved neither through return to the status quo nor a surrender to the Red Terror out of Russia, but by means of that middle course which avoids both yet loses none of the warnings and the lessons of the war. Where this course runs we may find if we return to that "older old" we coldly rejected that we might build up our own proud modernism that has passed in the red horror of universal war.

What part are we, as teachers, to play in this decision and this reconstruction? It is commonly said that we here at home need not concern ourselves with this; the soldiers back from the war will direct affairs during the next generation. This will probably be so, but full assurance of redemption does not lie in the fact. We believe they will bring back with them a new sense of justice, a new passion for real liberty, even a new sense of righteousness, but that knowledge and wisdom and judgment will match with their vision we do not know, and history gives us reason to doubt. There is a grave danger that they will fall into the hands of the "old gang" in politics, sociology, religion, education, to be exploited by them as they have exploited other generations, so to be turned from the direct course and their ardour made of no avail.

To speak colloquially, the "old gang" is still doing busi-

ness at the old stand, and with renewed activity. The ink was not dry on the Armistice before they were busily at work, and their activities increase daily. Reaction on the one hand, sentimental anarchy on the other, are ready to receive all new-comers and nullify their ardent impulses, and they will be strong men who resist their blandishments.

With this problem we teachers, as such, do not come in direct contact. Ours is the generation that follows, the children now growing up who in ten or twenty years are to play their part in the reconstruction that even then will not be accomplished, granted that it is reconstruction and not a post-Roman degeneration that confronts us. Here the opportunity and the power are great, and the duty and the privilege are commensurate therewith. I am not one of those that believe in the omnipotence of education; to me this seems one of the superstitions we inherited from the XIXth century—that most grossly superstitious of all centuries. It was closely allied to that other superstition of mechanistic evolution now so completely discredited by a revealing war. Education “draws out,” but it does not put in. It cannot change character, nor can environment; and character is the essential thing in man, its development the supreme object of education. There is essential difference in character between individuals, between families, between races, and no environment, even were it as beneficent and fertilizing as the environment of the last century has been sterile and forbidding, no education however spacious and illuminating, can change this character and bring either reversal or equalization of race-values and of character-potential. There is no more vicious heresy than that of the numerical equivalent. It is only in pure mathematics that one and one necessarily make two. One Joan of Arc and one Mrs. Eddy do not make two of anything; they remain to the end of time one of one thing and one of another. Only by eliminating every quality that differentiates them from undifferentiated matter, can that identity be achieved which makes them two.

Education does not transform, but it may and should perfect. It cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but it *may* prevent a silk purse (in potential) from falling to base uses, and it may make the ear of the humble *sus scrofa* a good organ, not a bad. This is its function, the development of inherent powers towards the exaltation of character, but it has not infrequently failed to do this; “Dotheboys Hall” and Mr. Wells’ “High Cross School” are

more than episodes in fiction. Education may be a bitter deterrent, the defeat of vital impulse, the arrestor of potency,—the which is a very great tragedy indeed.

At this moment we all are bound to weigh each his own work, and we are not forbidden to estimate those that belong to others. Looking at things frankly, then, with the fear of God before us, as it must be at such a moment as this, can we say that the specialized, secularized, mechanized education of the last generation has been wholly guiltless of the great débâcle that overtook modern civilization at the moment of its triumphant achievement? Can we say further that, whatever its record for the past, it is wholly the right thing, as it then stood, for the rebuilding of the world? We are bound to scrutinize the evidence closely, for the part education is to play in the determining of the future is hardly to be too highly estimated.

I venture to say that education, together with every other element in life, was quite measurably touched, and in some cases vitiated, by what I call the Three Errors of Modernism, that is to say; imperialism, materialism and the quantitative standard. You have asked me to speak on the influence of the last of these, but really the three are all so intertwined they can hardly be isolated the one from the other. The quantitative standard is the eternal enemy of real culture, for it substitutes the lust for power, with force as its means of operation, for the passion for perfection, which is the mark of all great civilization, and finds its expression, as it finds its goal, in the development of character. You may know a crescent from a decaying civilization by many marks, most of which, particularly under the latter condition, we disregard; but I know of none more fundamental than just this of the dominance either of the quantitative or the qualitative standard.

What bearing has this on teaching, and specially on the teaching of English? Just this. Adoption of the quantitative standard means above all things the loss of all sense of comparative values, and in the end the abandonment of the real things, the following after the false. It comes to this at last, that we lose sight of the end in our scientific enthusiasm over the means, so that these become an end in themselves and we close our careers as inventors, collectors and manipulators of mechanical toys. Has there been anything of this in the teaching of English as it was in the years before the war? A little, I think, though I gain my evidence at second hand, for I am too old to remember how

English was taught me (if it was) some forty years ago, and what I have seen of late has been through the mediumship of my children and younger kin.

Now it may be I hold a vain and untenable view as to the object of English teaching, even as I am told my view of education in general as having for its object the development of character, not mental Pelmanism, specialized information, or the capacity for getting on in the world, is vain and untenable. However this may be, I am willing to confess that I believe the object of teaching English is the unlocking of the treasures of thought, character and emotion preserved in the written records of the tongue, and the arousing of a desire to know and assimilate these treasures on the part of the pupil. I am very sure that English should not be taught as a thing ending in "ology," not as an intricate science with all sorts of laws and rules and exceptions, not as a system whereby the little Children of the Ghetto, and the offspring of Pittsburgh millionaires, and the spectacled infant elect of Beacon Hill can all be raised to the point where they can write with acceptable fluency the chiselled phrases of Matthew Arnold, the cadenced Latinity of Sir Thomas Browne, the sonorous measures of Bolingbroke or the distinguished and resonant periods of the King James Bible. Such an aim as this will always result in failure.

The English language is the great storehouse of the rich thought and the burning emotion of the English race, and all this, as it has issued out of character, builds character when it is made operative in new generations. There is no other language but Latin that has preserved so great a wealth of invaluable things, and English is taught in order that it all may be more available through that appreciation that comes from familiarity. There is no nobler record in the world: from Chaucer through Shakespeare, the English Bible, Lord Bacon, down to the moderns, is one splendid sequence of character-revelations through a perfect but varied art, for literature is also a fine art, and one of the greatest of all. Is it not fair to say that the chief duty of the teacher of English is to lead the student to like great literature, to find it and enjoy it for himself, and through it to come to the liking of great ideas?

In the old days there was an historical, or rather archaeological, method that was popular; also an analytical and grammarian method. There was also the philological method which was quite the worst of all and had almost as devastat-

ing results as in the case of Latin. It almost seems as though English were being taught for the production of a community of highly specialized teachers. No one here would go back to any of those quaint and archaic ways digged up out of the dim and remote past of the XIXth century. We should all agree, I think, that for general education, specialized, technical knowledge is unimportant and scientific intensive methods unjustifiable. For one student who will turn out a teacher there are five hundred that will be just simple voters, wage-earners, readers of the Saturday Evening Post and the New Republic, members of the Fourth Presbyterian Church or the Ethical Society, and respectable heads of families. The School of Pedagogy has its own methods (I am given to understand) but under correction I submit they are not those of general education. Shall I put the whole thing in a phrase and say that the object of teaching English is to get young people to like good things?

You may say this is English Literature, not English. Are the two so very far apart? English as a language is taught to make literature available. "Example is better than precept." Reading good literature for the love of it will bring in the habit of grammatical speaking and writing far more effectively than what is known as "a thorough grounding in the principles of English grammar." I doubt if the knowledge of, and facility in English can be built up on such a basis; rather the laws should be deduced from examples. Philology, etymology, syntax are derivatives, not foundations. "Practice makes perfect" is a saying that needs to be followed by the old scholastic defensive "*distinguo*." Practice in reading, rather than practice in writing, makes good English composition possible. The "daily theme" may be overdone; it is of little use unless *thought* keeps ahead of the pen.

Nor need the teaching of English be dessicated to dullness in order to preserve its dignity. History for a time was taught after this fashion,—history, the most sensational and romantic and highly coloured of all subjects!—because it confined itself to documents, facts, dates and other hampering impedimenta. Then comes Chesterton who writes a history of England from the Romans to King George V, in 285 small pages, containing, if I remember correctly, some six dates in all, (three of which are probably wrong) and history lives again. I have just been reading a book called "Expressive English" by Mr. James C. Fernald, which

does for the teaching of English something of what Chesterton did for history. It is more or less along these lines I think English may be taught in the future.

My plea then is for the recognition of character-development as the prime object of education, and for the teaching of English after a fashion that will reveal great thoughts through the great art of English literature and the perfectly illogical but altogether admirable English language. Sometimes I think I should like to undertake a course in the teaching of English, using as text books only the King James Bible, three or four of Shakespeare's plays, and selections from Swift, Bolingbroke, Burke, Thackeray, Cardinal Newman, Matthew Arnold, Stevenson, Coleridge, Keats and Browning. If I could have time enough, and my scholars did not turn Bolshevik, and I were not put under legal restraint, I am sure I could produce admirable results.

After all it comes in the end to the moral equation. Let us teachers work for the new vision of a new righteousness that is to redeem the world. If we do this, and can communicate our visions to our pupils, the *methods* will develop themselves. Our duty is to make our students *think*. The day of mechanical toys is over, brought to its ignominious end through the mechanical Juggernaut of Modernism we have made with our own hands. The spirit alone giveth life; the qualitative standard, the passion for perfection, once more rises triumphant over the discredited quantitative standard, the lust for power through force. Ingenious devices and technical efficiency lead only to the thing the whole world has risen in arms to slay, and by the grace of God has slain—and bound again for another thousand years.

The treasurer reports 256 unpaid dues for 1918! If you are one of these will you not please mail your dollar at once to Mr. A. B. DeMille, Milton Academy, Milton?

A SELECTED LIST OF WAR BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

The signing of the armistice and the prospect of peace does not lessen the interest of books relating to the war. Indeed, a new interest is added; for it is now becoming possible to make a selection of reading matter which will afford a general view of the whole vast struggle. The list presented herewith is an attempt in this direction. All the

books mentioned have been read and appreciated by boys of High School age.

I. THE WESTERN FRONT

The First Hundred Thousand.....	<i>Ian Hay</i>
Kitchener's Mob	<i>N. Hall</i>
Action Front	<i>B. Cable</i>
The First Canadians in France.....	<i>F. McKelvey Bell</i>
Over There with the Australians....	<i>Capt. R. Q. Knyvett</i>
America in France.....	<i>F. Palmer</i>
My Home in the Field of Honour.....	<i>Baroness Huard</i>

II. THE OTHER FRONTS

Gallipoli	<i>J. Masefield</i>
With the Turks in Palestine.....	<i>S. Aaronson</i>
To Bagdad with the British.....	<i>C. Clark</i>
Italy in the War.....	<i>S. Low</i>

III. THE WAR ON THE SEA

Sea Warfare	<i>R. L. Kipling</i>
The British Navy at War.....	<i>W. MacNeile Dixon</i>
The Fighting Fleets.....	<i>Ralph D. Paine</i>
Open Boats	<i>A. Noyes</i>
Merchant Seamen at War.....	<i>L. C. Cornford</i>

IV. IN THE AIR

Cavalry of the Clouds.....	<i>Captain Bott</i>
High Adventure.....	<i>N. Hall</i>
Winged Warfare.....	<i>Major W. A. Bishop, V. C.</i>

V. THE WAR CORRESPONDENTS

With the Allies.....	<i>R. H. Davis</i>
My Year of the Great War.....	<i>F. Palmer</i>
The Soul of the War.....	<i>P. Gibbs</i>
The A. E. F.—with General Pershing and the American Forces	<i>H. Brown</i>

VI. PRISONERS OF WAR

To Ruhleben—and Back.....	<i>G. Pyke</i>
Wounded and a Prisoner of War....	<i>"Exchanged Officer"</i>

VII. GERMAN MENTALITY

Gems (?) of German Thought.....	<i>W. Archer</i>
Because I am a German.....	<i>Hermann Freneau</i>

VIII. HISTORY OF THE WAR

Nelson's History of the War.....	<i>John Buchan</i>
My Four Years in Germany.....	<i>J. W. Gerard</i>
Headquarters Nights.....	<i>V. Kellogg</i>
The World War.....	<i>F. Simonds</i>

IX. FICTION

The Riddle of the Sands.....	<i>Erskine Childers (1909)</i>
Mr. Britling Sees It Through.....	<i>H. G. Wells</i>
Sonia	<i>S. McKenna</i>
The Devil's Cradle.....	<i>Mrs. Sidgwick</i>

X. MISCELLANEOUS

The Origins of the War.....	<i>J. H. Rose</i>
The War and Humanity.....	<i>J. M. Beck</i>
The Stakes of the War.....	<i>Stoddard and Frank</i>
Imperial England.....	<i>Lavell and Payne</i>
Towards the Goal.....	<i>Mrs. Humphrey Ward</i>
A Student in Arms.....	<i>D. Hankey</i>
Echoes of the War.....	<i>J. M. Barrie</i>

A. B. DEMILLE,
Milton Academy.

NOTES OF THE DECEMBER MEETING

In spite of bad weather nearly two hundred members attended the meeting of our Association at the Boston Public Library on Saturday, December 14. Mr. George Browne presided and led the discussion in which a goodly number took part.

We are printing in this issue the inspiring paper read at the meeting by Mr. Ralph Adams Cram. Those who did not attend will surely want to read it; those present on December 14 will want to have it on hand for reference.

A charter member of the Association remarked to the editor that programs devoted to methods and devices of teaching seemed to bring out our largest audiences. Though details of classroom work were hardly mentioned by the speakers on December 14, we believe that everyone left the hall with a feeling of larger responsibility, with a broader vision, and with a new courage for his daily tasks.

Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Association elected Mr. Samuel Thurber editor to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Thomas. Mr. Thurber is the Head of the English Department in the Newton Technical High School. Contributions and suggestions for the LEAFLETS should be sent to him at 59 North Street, Newtonville, Mass.

Mr. Alfred M. Hitchcock has been invited to take charge of the spring meeting which falls on March 15. If you have a suggestion, send it to him now at the Hartford Public High School, Hartford, Conn.

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that nowhere in all our educational field is it more necessary
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